

## Production efforts stepping up for AO

**by Rachel Newton**

Work has been bustling lately for the Arsenal's Directorate of Ammunition Operations. Not only has the directorate completed another successful First Article Test (FAT) on the M18 grenade, production in other munition areas is ramping up.

"Runs have been completed on the M767 (60MM infrared mortar), M853A1 (81MM illum rounds) and we are currently building another M853A1 run," said Roch Byrne, AO director, in a recent interview. "We are just about ready to crank up the white phosphorus plant to do a run of M110 (155MM) rounds."

Even with a two-year delay in the M18 program, two FATs have been passed on violet and yellow grenades. According to Byrne, fill and press was completed on the M18 violet grenades on March 23, with a run of approximately 165,000 grenades. "Every lot is tested which means that 35 grenades are run through a series of tests with zero failures," he said. "We will run approximately 270,000 yellow grenades."

The M18 program had been idle since February 2004. "Despite the fact that PBA's M18 lines were down for two years before being reactivated, we were able to pass a FAT," said Col. Brian Lindamood, PBA commander, in a January *Arsenal Sentinel* article. "We produced these items in record time with zero failures during the tests. This is a solid testimony to the commitment and responsiveness of the PBA workforce."

April 2004 was the last time any fill work has been done at the WP plant, said Byrne. "For the next quarter, we will be filling the M110s," he said. "We are really ramping up and we have a lot to do."

Another program AO is currently working on is the M90 LVOS (light-vehicle obscuration smoke system), which will get started this month with a run of approximately 13,000 per month. "We are going to be doing this program for about 3 months," said Byrne. "We are also going to get back into the RP (red phosphorus) butyl rubber business. It is going to be good."

A couple of key retirements in the directorate are already being felt. "It will hurt us a bit to lose Curtis Robinson, chief of production, and Clyde Branson, production controller," said Byrne. "We are going to be losing roughly 60 to 70 years of experience within one month period. It will leave a big space. It is tough."

Even though there has been some down time, the directorate is looking ahead towards a busy remainder of the year. "We have hired a few more folks and people are being moved around to deal with the current workloads," said Byrne. "Things are going really good and we have a great crew. We have probably the best production workforce we have had in a long time."